

68 COMMENTARY ON MACAULAY'S
HISTORY

that even the Earl of Dartmouth, who wrote a number of critical notes on the History (printed in all the best editions of that work), did not accuse its author of wilful falsehood.

No person has contradicted Burnet more frequently or with more asperity than Dartmouth. Yet Dartmouth wrote, ' I do not think he designedly published anything he believed to be false/ At a later period Dartmouth, provoked by some remarks on himself in the second volume of the Bishop's history, retracted this praise : but to such a retraction little importance can be attached. Even Swift has the justice to say, ' After all, he was a man of generosity and good nature/ ^x

Macaulay points out in his notes a number of Burnet's errors. Of his account of the death of Thomas Dangerfield, Macaulay says ' Burnet's narrative contains more mistakes than lines/ ² Again, speaking of the debates on the corporation bill in 1690 : ' Burnet's narrative contains more blunders than lines. He evidently trusted to his memory, and was completely deceived by it/ ³ Sometimes, as he shows, Burnet confuses things. He confounds, for instance, two different versions of the abjuration bill⁴

Nevertheless, in spite of these and other errors, the verdict of Macaulay is, on a view of the whole work, very favourable to Burnet.

It is usual to censure Burnet as a singularly

inaccurate
 historian ; but I believe the charge to be
 altogether unjust.
 He appears to be singularly inaccurate only
 because his
 narrative has been subjected to a scrutiny
 singularly
 severe and unfriendly. If any Whig thought
 it worth
 while to subject Reresby's Memoirs, North's
 Examen,
 Mulgrave's Account of the Revolution, or
 the Life of

¹ll_t 826 (vii).

³IV, 1783 (xv).

»I, 484 (iv).

* IV, 1825 (xv).